drafted this letter; therefore, they also know that the true effect of this letter is to prevent the Senate from acting on many important issues that have bipartisan support. With this letter, they have simply put in writing the political strategy the Republicans have pursued this entire Congress; namely, obstruct and delay action on critical matters and then blame Democrats for not addressing the needs of the American people. It is cynical but obvious and transparent.

We must move forward on matters of importance. We have numerous judges who need to be taken care of. I am trying to work something out with the Republican leader on those. I hope everyone understands there are issues we need to deal with. There are meetings going on as we speak to try to help us move forward and to allow us to complete action at the earliest possible date.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with Republicans controlling the first 30 minutes and Democrats controlling the next 30 minutes.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of quorum and ask unanimous consent that the time be charged equally.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

CONGRESSIONAL PRIORITIES

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, for the last 2 years, Democratic leaders in Washington have spent virtually all of their time ticking off items on the liberal wish list while they have had the chance: government-run health care, a national energy tax, financial regulations, bigger government, bigger deficits, union bailouts, government takeovers. So here we are, with just a few weeks left in the session, and they are still at it.

Last month, the American people issued their verdict on the Democratic priorities. Democrats have responded by doubling down. For 2 years, they legislated as if they were not in the middle of a national jobs crisis, and now they are legislating as if they do not realize the government is about to run out of money and every taxpayer in America is about to get slammed with a giant tax hike.

With just a few weeks to go before the end of the session, Democrats continue to place their priorities over the priorities of the American people. These are the things Democrats have chosen to do instead of preventing a massive tax hike that economists tell us would stifle the economy.

Republicans have pleaded with Democrats to put aside their wish list, to focus on the things Americans want us to focus on. They have ignored us. The voters repudiated their agenda at the polls. They have ignored them. Time is running out, and they are ignoring that.

The election was a month ago. It is time to get serious. It is time to focus on priorities.

Now, a little while ago, I delivered a letter to Senator REID signed by all 42 Senate Republicans. It says every Republican will vote against proceeding to any legislative matter until we have funded the government and protected every taxpayer from a tax hike. Basically, what it means is, first things first.

With time running out in this session, we need to focus on these critical priorities. As the letter states:

> Our constituents have repeatedly asked us to focus on creating an environment for private-sector job growth; it is time that our constituents' priorities become the Senate's priorities.

At the moment, every taxpayer in the country stands to get a massive tax increase and a cut in pay on December 31. We need to show the American people we care more about them and their ability to pay their bills than we do about the special interest groups' legislative Christmas list. Republicans are united in our opposition to proceeding to any of these things until Democrats make the priorities of the American people their own.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the letter to Senator REID I just referenced be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,
Washington, DC, November 29, 2010.

Hon. HARRY REID,
Majority Leader, Capitol Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR LEADER REID: The nation's unemployment level, stuck near 10 percent, is unacceptable to Americans. Senate Republicans have been urging Congress to make private-sector job creation a priority all year. President Obama in his first speech after the November election said ''we owe'' it to the American people to ''focus on those issues that affect their jobs.'' He went on to say that Americans ''want jobs to come back faster.'' Our constituents have repeatedly asked us to focus on creating an environment for private-sector job growth; it is time that our constituents' priorities become the Senate's priorities.

For that reason, we write to inform you that we will not agree to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to any legislative item until the Senate has acted to fund the government and we have prevented the tax increase that is currently awaiting all American taxpayers. With little time left in this Congressional session, legislative scheduling should be focused on these critical priorities. While there are other items that might ultimately be worthy of the Senate's attention, we cannot agree to prioritize any matters above the critical issues of funding the government and preventing a job-killing tax hike.

Given our struggling economy, preventing the tax increase and providing economic certainty should be our top priority. Without Congressional action by December 31, all American taxpayers will be hit by an increase in their individual income-tax rates and investment income through the capital gains and dividend rates. If Congress were to adopt the President's tax proposal to prevent the tax increase for only some Americans, small businesses would be targeted with a job-killing tax increase at the worst possible time. Specifically, more than 750,000 small businesses will see a tax increase, which will affect 50 percent of small-business income and nearly 25 percent of the entire workforce. The death tax rate will also climb from zero percent to 55 percent, which makes it the top concern for America's small businesses. Republicans and Democrats agree that small businesses create most new jobs, so we ought to be able to agree that raising taxes on small businesses is the wrong remedy in this economy. Finally, Congress still needs to act on the ''tax extenders'' and the alternative minimum tax ''patch,'' all of which expired on December 31, 2009.

We look forward to continuing to work with you in a constructive manner to keep the government operating and provide the nation's small businesses with economic certainty that the job-killing tax hike will be prevented.

Sincerely,

Mitch McConnell, Republican Leader; Jon Kyl, Republican Whip; Robert F. Bennett; Kay Bailey Hutchison; John Barrasso; John Cornyn; David Vitter; Tom Coburn; Pat Roberts; Mike Crapo; James M. Inhofe; Richard G. Lugar; Jim DeMint; John Thune; Lamar Alexander; Jim Bunning; Michael B. Enzi; Saxby Chambliss; John McCain; James E. Risch; Roger F. Wicker; Chuck Grassley; Johnny Isakson; Christopher S. Bond; Judd Gregg; Richard C. Shelby; Orrin G. Hatch; Bob Corker; Susan M. Collins; Richard Burr; George S. LeMieux; Mike Johanns; George V. Voinovich; Lindsey Graham; Jeff Sessions; Scott Brown; John Ensign; Thad Cochran; Sam Brownback; Lisa Murkowski; Olympia J. Snowe.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.